

# Meaningful Work Canvas Workshop

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## Abstract

Service design has achieved excellence in providing meaningful experiences for users. Nonetheless, service design did not reach the same success in providing good conditions for workers. To discuss this gap, the present thematic workshop will present the Meaningful Work Canvas. The research efforts on meaningful work, due to the multidimensionality of the concept, can shed light on some aspects of the work activity, which are particularly useful for service designers. The workshop will have four stages: tool presentation, interviews, service improvement, and conclusion. Convenors expect that the workshop will be an opportunity for participants to reflect on how work can be meaningful for themselves and on ways to design a worker-centered service.

**Keywords:** meaningful work, worker-centric design, purpose, health

## Workshop description

Over the last decades, human-centric design created services that provide meaningful experiences for its users. Nonetheless, every service relationship had another human entity: workers. For these latter group, human-centric design did not achieve the same success in providing workers' welfare (Penin & Soruco, 2021), generating conditions to which the term "servitude" would be more applicable.

Uber is an example of a service with millions of users whose conditions are more similar to "servitude" rather than "service." The precarious conditions that uber partners – the name the platform calls its drivers – are subject to, stimulated the formation of unions to struggle for drivers' rights. Beyond neoliberal business management, a possible reason for the poor service workers' condition is the lack of tools tailored to design for workers.

In the present workshop, participants will run the Meaningful Work Canvas, a tool to design services for workers, grounded on the concept of meaningful work, defined as the amount of significance the job holds for an individual (Rosso et al., 2010) (Rosso et al., 2010). Meaningful work has a multidimensional character that offers a holistic approach to understanding workers' reality.

To make meaningful work operational for design ends, the tool acknowledges four dimensions, represented in one quadrant each, and the disabling issues, like the model presented in figure 1. The four quadrants are doing for the self (#1), doing for others (#2), relationship with others (#3), and relationship with the self (#4). The figure 1 presents the model.

Quadrant #1 discusses the connection between the operational characteristics of a job with work meaningfulness. This quadrant aims to understand the impact of intrinsic motivation, "the desire to engage in an activity because one enjoys, or is interested in, the activity" (Rosso et al., 2010, p.97), on meaningful work. In this quadrant, designers will investigate the intrinsic motivation one has with its activities without considering their impact on other individuals and the world, for example, if a professor feels pleasure in perceiving herself on a stage during the classes. Besides investigating the impact of intrinsic motivation, designers should evaluate opportunities workers have to express their talents and develop their skills and how a job impacts self-efficacy and provides autonomy to workers.



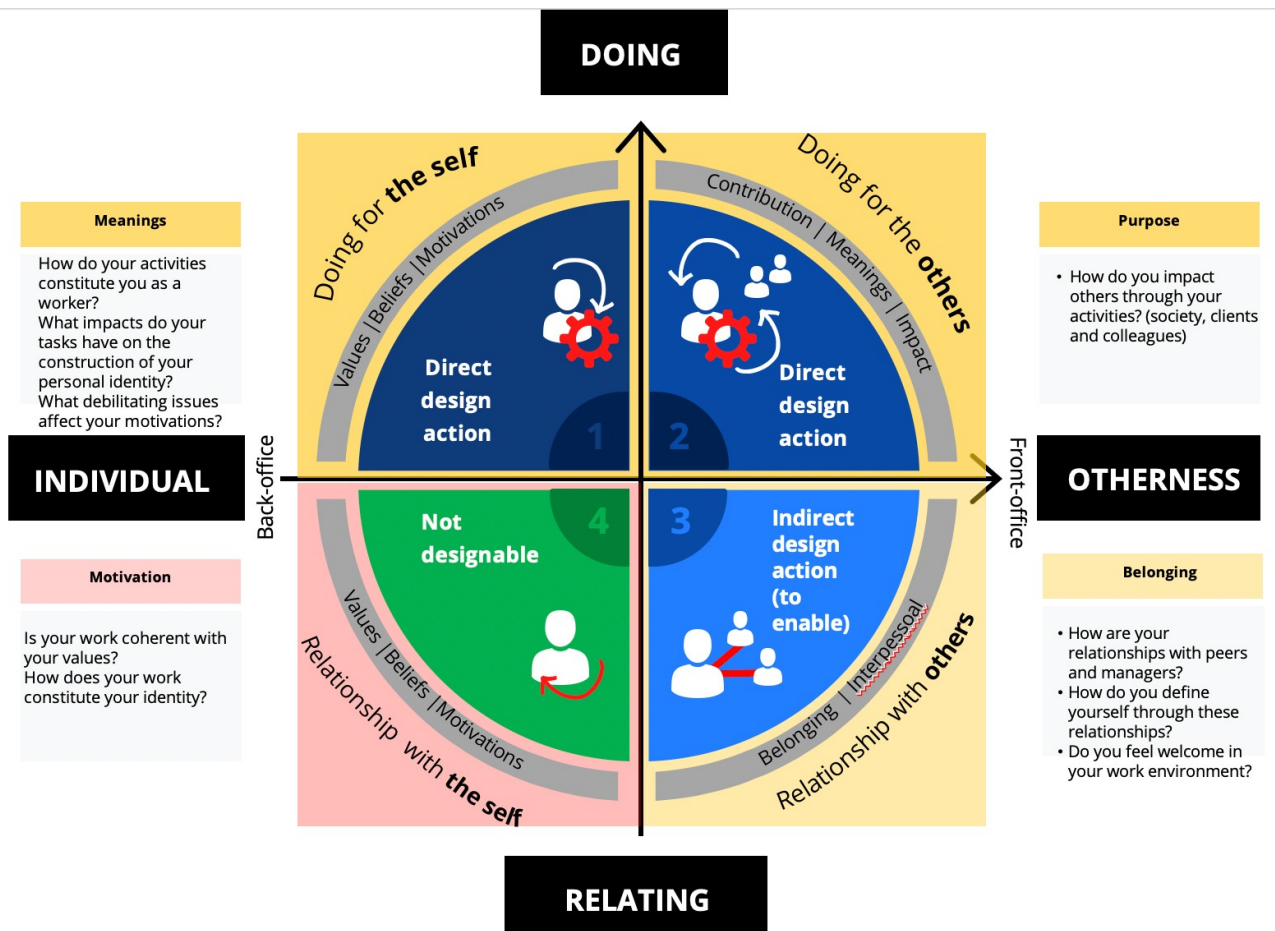


Figure 1 - The Meaningful Work Canvas. Source: authors.

Quadrant #2 discusses how the worker’s activities impact colleagues, customers, society, and the environment. A key concept regarding quadrant #2 is calling, or “a belief that a career is a mechanism to promote the greater good and help others” (Barreto et al., 2022). To illustrate, teachers may consider their work as a means to build a better society by improving their students’ knowledge. Designers should provide opportunities to foster these callings.

Quadrant #3 assess the impact on meaningful work from the relationships a worker has with her colleagues and customers. Designers should investigate experiences of belongingness aimed at or felt by workers. Workers may experience belongingness in two ways (Rosso et al., 2010). First, by social identification, whereby an individual considers meaningful being part of a desirable group. For example, an individual who

enjoys the Olympics may consider working in the event meaningful, as she feels part of something special. Second, interpersonal connectedness, as this sense creates feelings of comfort and (social) support which are meaningful for individuals. Therefore, designers should focus on offering healthy, cozy work environments to stimulate interpersonal connectedness.

Quadrant #4 investigates the internally-driven purposes (Barreto et al., 2022). Purpose is the sense of directedness an individual has in life (Rosso et al., 2010). So, internally-driven purposes are the ones an individual has toward herself, like experiencing personal growth at work or working in concert with their values. A person concerned with the environment may consider working in an environmental consultancy a job in concert with her values.

The last element from the model is the disabling questions (Barreto et al., 2022). This group encompasses toxic work environments, inauthentic CSR policies (i.e., greenwashing), low wages, and low job stability. The disabling questions are essential in worker-centric design as they challenge the meaningfulness an individual derives from work (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017) and may deflate experiences of meaningful work. An individual may consider her work to be meeting a purpose, however, at the same time, her colleagues manifest toxic behaviors which are not stroke by the management. Her colleagues' behavior can deflate work meaningfulness. Therefore, to design services that facilitate employees' meaningfulness-making, the practitioner should emphasize enhancing characteristics from multiple meaningful work dimensions and hindering the disabling issues.

Meaningfulness is a basic human need, and work plays a vital role in this search (Barrett & Dailey, 2018). Nonetheless, the lack of meaningfulness can have harmful consequences like burnout, depression, and suicide ideations (Bendassolli, 2017; Martela & Pessi, 2018). Meaningful work is powerful for widely understanding the world of work due to its multidimensionality, whereby several questions coalesce around the construct.

This workshop allows participants to design for the workers, focusing on meaningful work. It also has an educational character, as participants will be capable of understanding how work can be meaningful for themselves in their careers.

## Session set-up

The workshop aims to make participants improve an existing service that facilitates meaningfulness-making from employees. To meet this goal, the practitioner has to



understand the meaningful work canvas dimensions and run interviews that will ground service creations. The workshop is split into four stages: tool presentation, interviews, service improvement, and conclusion.

In the tool presentation stage, organizers will explain to participants the description of the four quadrants, the disabling issues, and the interview protocol (15 minutes). In the interview stage, participants will be split into doubles and run the previously built interview protocol with their respective partners; the respondents will answer the questions based on their current or recent job (20 minutes).

Next, in the service improvement stage, the participant will improve the service whereby her partner works (or has worked) by addressing the issues and enhancing the benefits collected during the interview (20 minutes). Organizers will provide examples to facilitate designers' jobs in the second stage. Finally, in the conclusion stage, each participant will describe the improvements developed, emphasizing how the interview results influenced the characteristics of the service, and her partner will comment if the improvements adhere to her needs and aspirations (25 minutes).

Table 1 summarizes all stages.

Stage	Duration	Description
Presentation	15 minutes	Organizers will explain the model
Interview	20 minutes	Participants will be split into doubles and run the interview protocol (organizers previously built the protocol)
Service Improvement	20 minutes	Participants will enhance a service based on the insights collected in the interviews
Conclusion	25 minutes	Participants will present the service they enhanced, and each participant will evaluate her partner's improvements

Table 1 – Session set-up

## Space requirements

The main requirements from this workshop are one table for each participant (or double), a chair for each participant and the convenor, a projector, and a notebook. Also, paper and pen are necessary for participants to develop their ideas.

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## Convenors bio:

**Convenor 1:** Gustavo Barreto (MSc, Universidade Federal Fluminense) is a PhD candidate in the Department of Production Engineering at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. His main research interests include the experience of meaningful work for employees from developing countries, worker-centric design, resilience, and the decolonial option in organizational studies.

**Convenor 2:** Carla Cipolla (PhD, Politecnico di Milano) is an associate professor in the Coppe at UFRJ - Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Her main research interests include the design practices related to interpersonal relations and their consequences for organizational innovation, mainly in the service sector, and design for social innovation.

